

"Keeps away the hunger, see?" he said, bracing comfortably on the top step now.

"You're that, eh?" questioned the passenger.

"Well, when you get to Crescent use my contribution for a genuinely square meal," and the speaker handed Dan a half dollar.

"Strike wood! I'm blind or dreaming!" cried Dan, and he joyously tapped the welcome coin against the car door. "Say, I'm in rare luck!"

The young man smiled and went into the coach. His charitable act pleased him. He was, in fact, filled with pleasant thoughts. Well might that be, for inside his breast pocket was a long, fat wallet. It contained \$1,200, the savings of two years, which would enable him to go to Crescent, marry Mary Lane, the girl of his choice, enjoy a rational wedding trip and have enough left over to furnish a neat little flat.

So he dreamed fond visions of bliss reclining in the car seat, and Dan, outside, extracted the last atom of warmth and flavor from the diminishing cigaret stump and closely clasped the half dollar, gloating over an anticipated, satisfying bill of fare in the near future.

Dan lolled over the entire platform now. There would probably be no more interruptions and no stops until Crescent was reached. He dozed and must have been on the verge of dreams for fully two hours when there came a shock. Dan just grabbed the brake rod in time to evade a topple over.

"What is it?" he grumbled. "This isn't Crescent. I don't like that!" he added, swinging sideways, clinging with one hand and peering ahead.

A red light showed the stop signal just ahead of the engine. The headlight of the locomotive revealed more than one figure scurrying about. Dan had good eyesight. Suddenly he leaped to the ground with the startling words:

"Ginger—it's a holdup!"

Dan ran to the side of the track. He made out at least six men armed with revolvers lining or aboard of the train. Two had clambered aboard the locomotive; two had boarded the express car; two others were coming down the tracks.

"They'll take my 50 cents, maybe!" half joked Dan to himself. "And say, it isn't six miles to Crescent. They've detached the engine."

Dan glanced about to find a hiding place. None offered, for there was no brush along the sides of the track, which were sloping and confined, the track in a sort of cut, open only ahead, where there was a crossing. There were, however, telegraph poles.

"It will sure be more comfortable aloft!" mused Dan.

Scurrying up a pole, with or without climbers, was a familiar task for Dan. He reached the crossbars scarcely breathless. "Regular free movie show!" he soliloquized, as some pistol shots echoed out. "Ginger, again! Why, it would make me a hero."

A suggestion had come to Dan's mind that stirred him mightily. He saw that two of the train robbers were going through the train and relieving the passengers of their money and jewelry. Ahead, two others were battling at the doors of the express car.

"It's a lonely spot and they'll have to take time to get the safe open. I'll make the try."

Dan wound one leg about the cross tie of the pole. He whipped out his nippers. He snipped the main wire in two and drew together the several ends.

"Early education comes back to me clear as crystal—what!" he chuckled. "Now then, have they got an intelligent operator at the other end of the wire or a bunkhead?"

What Dan had done was simple and scarcely original. He tapped out a slow but startling message and some one at the other end of the line